

JOHN ABBOT'S LONDON YEARS

PART IV

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V. The departure for America

In his well-known biographical sketch of John Abbot, William Swainson wrote that "At an early age he was engaged by three or four of the leading entomologists of England, to go out to North America, for the purpose of collecting insects for their cabinets. After visiting several parts of the Union, he determined to settle in the province of Georgia, where he immediately began his researches."⁸⁶ Swainson's account is only superficially correct. He did not correspond with Abbot until 1816, and he was unaware of the precise circumstances of the elder naturalist's emigration. Inspired by Smeathman's efforts in Africa and the exotic specimens in the London cabinets, Abbot began to "entertain thoughts of going abroad to collect foreign Insects" (N). As he later remembered, "in the beginning of the Year 1773" he was "determined to come to America," and the only problem was "what part to choose." Although he spoke to a Frenchman who praised Louisiana highly, he had "met with a hist[ory] of Virginia painted in such glowing Colours" that he turned his thoughts there. The prospect of a shorter voyage to Virginia helped Abbot to make his decision.

Evidence in Drury's papers indicates that these events occurred earlier than the date recorded by Abbot many years afterward. On 20 November 1772 Drury wrote to Smeathman that "Young Abbot is going to Virginia on ye same purpose as yourself, he is to collect [for?]⁸⁷ the dealer in King Street who I imagine you well remember."⁸⁸ Various letters from Drury reveal the identity of the chief sponsor of Abbot's American venture. He was Thomas Martyn, who is now best known for a number of illustrated works on natural history, especially *The Universal Conchologist* (1784 [-1792]);⁸⁹ *The English Entomologist*, (1792 [-1793]);⁹⁰ *Aranei, or a Natural History of Spiders* (1793), derived from Albin and Clerck; and *Psyche: Figures of Non-descript Moths, and Butterflies* (1797).⁹¹ At the time, Martyn was a well-known Covent Garden specimen dealer, who first appeared in Drury's correspondence in 1770 as "a Man in London who buys and sells all sorts of natural curiosities." He had a continuing stock of American insects; one of his suppliers was Thomas James, a resident of New York who also furnished Drury with many of the specimens figured in the *Illustrations*. Drury first mentioned Martyn by name in the papers when the merchant paid a sum in 1772 to be sent to James for a shipment of insects.⁹² The

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business in King Street appears to have been profitable. Martyn eventually became one of the two best-known conchological dealers in London (the other was George Humphrey) after giving four hundred guineas for two-thirds of the shells brought back from Cook's last expedition.⁹³ (When he issued the prospectus for *The Universal Conchologist* in 1784, Martyn was still at 26 King Street, Covent Garden.⁹⁴ He soon moved to the Marlborough Street address better known from his later publications.)

The precise terms of Martyn's 1772 agreement with Abbot are unknown. Apparently he promised to purchase whatever natural history specimens the collector could ship from Virginia to London. Drury's correspondence does not identify other active sponsors, if indeed there were any except Drury himself, who certainly hoped to profit from the voyage. He principally wished insects, so he could hardly match or improve upon Martyn's wider proposal, and there is no hint in the sources of a joint subscription such as was raised to send Smeathman to Africa — even though it is possible that some of Drury's friends (such as Fothergill, who also craved American insects) wished to benefit indirectly from the new venture. Drury understood that Martyn was to be the initial recipient of entomological specimens from Virginia, but he did not hesitate to lend his departing friend whatever assistance he could in preparation for the voyage. Abbot eventually repaid him for his efforts in a way that the canny Drury surely anticipated.

However, most of the Georgian material which would grace the cabinets of Britain and Europe was to be sold by John Francillon, the jeweller who acted as Abbot's agent from the 1780s until his death in 1816. Swainson explained that "The late Mr. Francillon, whose magnificent collection of insects, which rivalled that of Drury, is still remembered, was his [Abbot's] chief friend and correspondent, through whose means and agency he procured large commissions from the British and Continental collectors, and different public museums, for Georgian insects."⁹⁵ Correspondence with Swainson and the Manchester manufacturer John Leigh Philips illuminates Francillon's methods of selling Abbot's specimens and watercolours.⁹⁶ So little is known of Francillon's activities before 1782 that it is unclear whether he and Abbot had met in London. Equally lacking are manuscript sources to document Abbot's transfer of allegiance from Martyn to Francillon.⁹⁷

The ornithologist John Latham was a direct recipient of Abbot's favours, and Drury was acquainted with Latham as early as 1772.⁹⁸ However, it is unlikely that Abbot knew Latham in England, or that Latham was more than casually aware of Abbot's activities before Francillon showed him a set of ornithological drawings and notes received from Abbot in 1792.⁹⁹ Apparently James Edward Smith obtained the watercolours and data for his collaboration with Abbot

through Francillon's agency; at any rate, when Abbot left England, Smith was a boy of twelve who was yet to turn his attention to natural history. William Swainson, who like Latham received materials directly from Abbot, was not yet born.¹⁰⁰ There is no decisive evidence that any of the British naturalists who were well-known friends, correspondents or collaborators much later in Abbot's life were also among his supporters when he left for America.

The Royal Society of London gave Abbot at least nominal assistance, perhaps through the urging of Joseph Banks, George Edwards, Solander or Fothergill, all of whom were Fellows. A letter from William Legge, Earl of Dartmouth and secretary of state for the colonies, to John Murray, Earl of Dunmore and governor of Virginia, provides the evidence: "The Royal Society having appointed Mr. John Abbot, to make researches and collections in Virginia in those branches of natural history & productions which are more particularly objects of their study and enquiry; I beg leave, at the request of the Committee of that Society for natural history, to recommend Mr. Abbot to your protection, and am commanded by The King to desire you will give him every countenance and assistance in your power in the prosecution of the commendable purposes of the Society."¹⁰¹ Such letters in behalf of naturalists travelling abroad were not uncommon, and they do not necessarily testify to a special 'appointment,' despite the explicit statement. The Society had granted these "letters recommendatory" since the seventeenth century. As one historian has explained, "their object was to request that all persons in authority abroad would kindly receive the bearer, who was desirous of cultivating science, and show him any attention in their power, particularly with reference to the nature of his scientific pursuits." The documents, which were issued to aid "intelligent persons, whether Fellows of the Society or not,"¹⁰² served (at least from the Society's viewpoint) to further its general aim of the improving of natural knowledge.¹⁰³ Abbot's recommendation, one of two written by Dartmouth on the same day to benefit overseas travellers at the Society's request, was sent directly to Dunmore.

Abbot sold his large cabinet of insects and his accumulated drawings early in 1773,¹⁰⁴ and had three smaller wainscot cabinets constructed for transportation to Virginia. He booked passage on the *Royal Exchange*, which was to sail to the James River in April. When the vessel was delayed, he secured employment through the recommendation of the dealer-naturalist George Humphrey, "making Drawings of Nat. history[,] shells &c. at a good price, on Vellum at a Guinea a piece" (N). Humphrey later had specimens from Georgia which were presumably collected by Abbot, but it is not known whether these were sent directly as the result of an agreement made in London, or were purchased from Martyn, Drury or

Francillon.¹⁰⁵ (The same problem exists with Georgian specimens in the cabinets of Banks, Lee of Hammersmith and other possible friends and acquaintances.)

In May Drury wrote in Abbot's behalf to two Virginia correspondents and suppliers, the minister Devereux Jarratt and the physician James Greenway, both of Dinwiddie County. He explained to Jarratt that Abbot was a "young Gentleman going to Virginia on purpose to collect the various articles in Natural History; in doing w[hi]ch he purposes to spend some months, perhaps Years, according to the success he meets with in the various departments of that pursuit. [*footnote*: The principal Articles he intends to collect are Birds, Plants, Insects -- Fishes, Animals &c and also Minerals, Fossills &c &c--] You mention. . . your refraining sending me any more Insects because you have met with few or none different from those you have already sent . . . Mr. Abbot may be very serviceable to you by pointing out those particular species that are scarce here & consequently valuable even tho you may have sent some of them already. And as his judgment may be relied on in that matter he may be able to save you some trouble and difficulty, on the other hand you may perhaps be of equal service to him by informing him where there are any places that afford curious Stones Minerals &c -- for as he is engaged in so general a pursuit, any information he can get of that kind will be very usefull to him." Drury informed Greenway, whose knowledge of botany was considerable, that Abbot's "principal Forte" had been "Insects & therefore he may stand in need of your help for collecting the other branches . . . As he has every thing to learn & seek out in pursuing the above design your assistance can probably save him much trouble & labour. . . . Mr. Abbot on the other hand will be able to improve your knowledge in Insects & thus together ye may promote the purpose of Natural History."¹⁰⁶

Drury's letters to Jarratt and Greenway confirm that Martyn and others who expected to gain from Abbot's collecting efforts hoped for a wide range of material. (In fact, he devoted most of his attention to insects and birds.) The letters indicate that the Virginian residence was meant to be temporary, much like Smeathman's sojourn in Africa. They also reflect the very limited experience which Abbot had in areas of natural history other than entomology. His friends did not consider this to be a serious impediment, for it was thought that Abbot would adapt quickly to his new profession. Drury was not alone in his opinion when he wrote to a friend in the country that "gr[ea]t Expectations are formed."¹⁰⁷

As Abbot's ship was still delayed, he continued to work at his temporary employment. A customer who was aware of his talents attempted to persuade him to postpone his departure for a longer time and undertake a further series of drawings. He recorded that the request "was to[o] late. One Morning I went to the Coffee

house to know when the Ship wou'd sale, was told she had sailed, but [I] might perhaps overtake her in the River"(N). Abbot was alarmed, as he had paid his passage and his baggage was on the vessel. He hired a post chaise, and with his family he pursued the *Royal Exchange* all the way to Deal, where he was able to board. The ship remained several days in the Downs before anchor was weighed on 13 July 1773.¹⁰⁸ Drury could finally inform Smeathman that "young Abbot is gone to Virginia to collect for Martin."¹⁰⁹

VI. From England to Georgia

When the *Royal Exchange* stopped at Madeira to take on wine, Abbot "walked about the Town & dined at a hotel." An attempt with his net amid the near-tropical exuberance of vegetation was unrewarded; although the day was fine he "did not meet with any Butterfly or Moth" (N). Aboard ship he became acquainted with the Goodall family, and decided to board at their home, approximately a hundred miles from the mouth of the James, rather than proceed to Dinwiddie County and present himself to Jarratt and Greenway. When the vessel reached the James River in September, Abbot and his new friends were taken upstream in a sloop as far as Jamestown, where they were able to hire chairs and proceed to the Goodall plantation in Hanover County (N). Abbot began to collect immediately. On 9 November he reported the results of his industry to Drury, who understood from the letter that the naturalist had already taken "570 species"¹¹⁰ of insects in Virginia. Drury commended the effort, urging Abbot to undertake rearing as part of his activities: "when you set about breeding you will find a numerous tribe of ye Lepidoptera that are unknown to us. -- The truth is Nobody here knows what that Country produces because Nobody has ever tried to obtain [its] Insects by that method."

Abbot was reminded to pursue other objects of natural history, "particularly the Mineralia. . . . the *Stones* of America also we are as ignorant of as the Insects & if you search diligently into that Class perhaps you may make discoveries of great importance." Drury provided a brief lesson about "stones," adding a word about "Fossills of various kinds," which he knew Abbot was "not unacquainted with. . . but I have no doubt Mr. Martin has already given you ample directions on that head so that what I have said may perhaps be unnecessary, however as I am ignorant on what terms you & he are connected let me add that if it does not break in upon them & you should meet with any of the above things I shall be very ready to receive any. . . upon such an equitable footing as may be beneficial to both of us." Drury's appeal for geological specimens was partially prompted by other reasons than his usual desire to further science while enriching his own collections. At the time he was also seeking gemstones and other suitable material to use in his recently expanded activities as goldsmith and jeweller.¹¹¹

Considering his close relationship with Drury, it is curious that Abbot had not yet revealed the exact details of his agreement with Thomas Martyn.

In his letter, Drury warned Abbot to avoid the political disputes which were rapidly polarizing the Virginians, because to carry out his design it would be "absolutely necessary to look with indifferent eyes on all parties whatsoever." The advice would soon be very useful. There was news of Smeathman and Fothergill, as well as the information that the Royal Society had "come to a resolution of making a great figure by getting a good collection of Natural History to w[hi]ch end they have wrote to all parts of the world where any speculative Men are to be found to collect the various articles in Nature for them[;] perhaps you may be applied to for that purpose very soon."¹¹² No evidence has yet been found to indicate that Abbot was ever approached after his "letters recommendatory" were issued, or that he ever sent specimens to enrich the Society's cabinet.

Abbot continued to board with the Goodall family. He weathered a season of "fevers & fluxes" which ravaged the area, and began to collect again early in 1774. Although he was "much disappointed in not meeting with the variety of Insects" he expected during the warmer months, by late summer he had accumulated enough entomological specimens for an initial shipment to Martyn. One parcel arrived in London late in November, accompanied by letters from Abbot to his friends promising a larger box to follow. Drury wrote to Smeathman about the "pretty Coll[ectio]n" which he had obviously seen at Martyn's. Abbot was described as "certainly. . . exceeding industrious & will by next y[ea]r have sent home ye princip[a]l part of ye Ins[ect]s to be procured in Virginia as well phal[enas] as pap[ilio]s there being a great number of ye former in this Collect[i]o[n] & in his grand one he writes word there are several hund[re]d Species."¹¹³

In his letter to Martyn, Abbot announced that he had almost decided to leave Virginia and move southward. His thoughts were influenced as much by the political situation as by his dissatisfaction with the extent of the entomological fauna. The colony was rapidly moving toward revolution. Lord Dunmore, the governor who had been directed to afford him protection and assistance, had dissolved the assembly, which in turn had met independently, adopted a boycott association, and proposed a general congress of delegates from the colonies. Impelled by his own purposes, Drury hoped that Abbot would go to Surinam. He wished to have more insects from there, and he told Smeathman that if only the eager Abbot would follow his advice, "Eng[lan]d will soon be stocked with ye produce of that Colony."¹¹⁴ To Abbot he extolled the virtues of Surinam: "you may live there as conveniently as at New York or any other City on the Continent & may go into the woods without any danger of Men or Beasts." Abbot was advised to engage

an agent in New York who could receive his South American collections, ship them to London, and remit the payments; it was "a matter absolutely necessary to be established, without which you cannot have any Intercourse with your Friends here in London."

Drury informed Abbot of the activities of Sir Ashton Lever,¹¹⁵ who had "the finest Collection of Birds in England," and who had just taken Leicester House, where he intended to establish a museum: "upon my mentioning to him a design if you should entertain such of going to Surinam, I make no doubt but he would . . . give you all possible encouragement to collect Birds & other animals." An account of Virginia minerals by Abbot was pronounced satisfactory. Drury also reported the results of his latest visit to King Street. Abbot had offered him duplicates from the initial parcel of insects: "in consequence thereof I rec[eive]d of Mr Martin 10 of ye Lepidoptera being those Species of w[hi]ch you sent 3 -- I could not reconcile it to myself to rob you of any Species where there was less than 3.-- I am exceedingly pleased with what you have sent & shall be more so I am confident with the grand Collection that is every day expected."¹¹⁶

The second parcel never reached London. As Abbot recalled, "the Ship was lost on the English coast, together with my Insects." Upon being informed of the tragedy, he was "much dispirited," and made a "resolution to return to England again, the times likewise becoming alarming." He was told that the captain of a ship bound for London would visit the Hanover County court house. The master did not appear (N), and Abbot's final decision was to remain in Virginia for another collecting season. In October 1774 the newly-formed Continental Congress had enacted legislation which directed, among other provisions, that the colonies should refrain from importing British goods after 1 December, and cease exports to Britain after 10 September 1775. There was strong sentiment in Virginia for the so-called "Continental Association." As the September deadline neared, Abbot readied another shipment containing his 1775 catch so as to be able to consign it on a vessel going directly to England. Once again the Fates had their way. As the "Notes" record, Abbot's parcel "was on board the boat in the River [being transported] to the Ship, when a terrible September storm arose in the night, and the boat was lost together with my Insects."

The destruction of another season's captures was hard to bear. Moreover, to a young Englishman with close ties to the mother country, the local situation was "now becoming very troublesome" (N). Dunmore had fled from the governor's 'palace,' the practical transfer of power was now complete, and the colony was in undisguised rebellion under the Committee of Safety.¹¹⁷ For some time Abbot had been acquainted with his host's cousin, William Goodall, "who had lived in Georgia with his Relations. . . .

he talked much in praise of Georgia, & wanted to go back there but had not the means to bear his Expences." Now, "hearing that Georgia had not then joined the other Colonies," Abbot joined with his friend and several Goodall family members, furnishing the necessary cash himself. The little party left for Georgia early in December 1775. After travelling overland for two months and overcoming the problems of a harsh winter, Abbot and his comrades finally reached their destination, about thirty miles below Augusta. A log house was erected for William Goodall, and Abbot took up board with the family "for some time after" (N).

The twenty-four-year-old collector was now in Georgia, where, but for a few exceptions, he would remain for the rest of his long life. Ironically enough, considering the immediate reason for his departure from Virginia, he arrived just in time to witness the overthrow of the royal government and the beginning of war in another colony. Georgia had tarried far behind the more radical centers of revolutionary sentiment, but now events were rapidly moving toward a conclusion. While Abbot was on his journey, the Georgia Council of Safety had arrested the colonial governor, James Wright, and other leading Tories. In March 1776, a month after Abbot's arrival, hostilities began, Wright and his friends escaped, and British authority was at least temporarily removed.¹¹⁸ When concluding his "Notes," Abbot declared that "as the first Years of my living in Georgia, contains much more of Adventure, than the former part of my life, and continued through such bad & terrible time[s], that I often reflect, upon the goodness of providence, in bringing me safely through them."¹¹⁹ Royal troops returned to Georgia at the end of 1778, occupying Savannah. By mid-1780 most of the state, including Augusta, was once more under British control. For a year there was savage guerilla action in the back country, until a 1781 offensive by American troops reduced the Crown's authority to the coastal area. In summer 1782 the British finally evacuated Savannah, allowing Georgia to recover from the hardships of war.

Abbot could now pursue his overseas transactions without undue difficulty. None of the specimens which he was to send from Georgia were ever lost (N). Although a number of Lepidoptera which he surely collected were illustrated in Thomas Martyn's *Psyche* (1797), postwar shipments to Martyn cannot be documented because the papers of Abbot's principal sponsor appear to have been destroyed, and Drury's surviving correspondence does not refer to further parcels for the King Street dealer. Drury was well rewarded for his years of assistance. The goldsmith's provenance notebooks record the acquisition of several insects from Abbot during the war years 1780 and 1781; over a hundred specimens, chiefly Virginian, in 1784; a substantial collection of nearly five hundred Georgian insects in 1785; and smaller shipments in 1786

and 1789, "Dru" Drury died in 1803, and when his cabinet was dispersed during the famous auction held a year and a half later, many insects furnished by Abbot found their way into other collections.¹²⁰

By the time of Drury's sale, Abbot's specimens had been valuable commodities for several decades. The unassuming naturalist's career had nearly completed a second phase, the subject of another essay. Abbot had established his primacy, through Francillon's agency and the publication of his watercolours and notes by Smith, as the most knowledgeable collector and observer of insects, as well as the most talented entomological illustrator, resident in North America. His ornithological drawings had already gained attention. John Abbot had fulfilled the promise of his London years, and his future contributions to the study of natural history in America would more than justify the "gr[ea]t expectations" of his early friends.

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NOTES

⁸⁶Swainson, *Taxidermy*, 99.

⁸⁷The MS. is torn away.

⁸⁸Drury to Henry Smeathman, 20 November 1772, Drury letterbook, 254, BM(NH).

⁸⁹The date span of *The universal conchologist* is a matter of interpretation. If one accepts the final plate of medals as a bibliographical necessity to complete the work, the terminal date is 1792, although the conchological portion was completed by 1787. Surely the first two so-called editions should be termed issues.

⁹⁰Ronald S. Wilkinson, "A bibliographical description of Thomas Martyn's *The English entomologist* (1792)," *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.* 90 (1978), 263-264; Wilkinson, "The date of Thomas Martyn's *The English entomologist*: 1792 or 1793?"; *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.* 93 (1981), 135.

⁹¹The identity of "Mr. Martin," the King Street, Covent Garden dealer, with

Thomas Martyn, writer of natural history books, has not been previously announced, despite considerable evidence in eighteenth-century sources. Jonas Dryander identified Thomas Martyn as a "mercator rerum naturalium Londini" in *Catalogus bibliothecae historico-naturalis Josephi Banks* (London, 1796-1800), 5: 347. William G. Maton and Thomas Rackett also knew that Martyn was a dealer; "An historical account of testaeological writers," *Trans. Linn. Soc. Lond.* 7 (1804), 203. Dance characterized Martyn as "a knowledgeable dealer, versatile writer and gifted artist," and described his activities in buying and selling shells, quoting from eighteenth-century correspondence; *Shell collecting*, 99-100. The usual secondary sources, such as Martyn's entry in the *Dictionary of national biography*; William H. Dall, "Thomas Martyn and The universal conchologist," *Proc. U.S. natn. Mus.* 29 (1906), 415-432, and the continuation, "Supplementary notes on Martyn's Universal conchologist," *Proc. U.S. natn. Mus.* 33 (1908), 185-192; Harry B. Weiss, "Thomas Martyn, conchologist, entomologist and pamphleteer of the eighteenth century," *Am. Collector* 3 (1926), 57-62, and Weiss, "Thomas Martyn's 'English entomologist,'" *Jl N.Y. ent. Soc.* 46 (1938), 321-325, do not mention Martyn's career before 1784. The earliest of his presently recorded publications was *Hints of important uses, to be derived from aerostatic globes* (London, 1784), written at the King Street address as part of the furor of speculative pamphlets which accompanied the earliest balloon ascensions. The prospectus for *The universal conchologist* was published in the same year. Martyn's activities as an occasional patriotic and nationalistic pamphleteer are revealed by *The soldier's and sailor's friend* (London, 1786); *A dive into Buonaparte's councils* (London, 1804); and *Great Britain's jubilee monitor and Briton's mirror* (London, 1810). Martyn is said to have been a native of Coventry, and presumably he was alive in 1814, the date of composition of his entry in the *Biographical dictionary of living authors of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1816), 226, which described him as "an ingenious naturalist in London." He has traditionally been confused with the Cambridge botanist Thomas Martyn (1735-1825).

⁹² Martyn was first mentioned by Drury in a letter to Sepp, who wished a specimen of the saturniid *Actias luna* (L.), figured in the *Illustrations*, 1, plate 24. Drury wrote that the "Man in London" had "one of this sort, but he will not dispose of it under seven Shillings & sixpence, a price I would not choose to give him unless I had your authority"; Drury to Jan C. Sepp, 9 November 1770, Drury letterbook, 217, BM(NH). Drury's *luna*, and apparently Martyn's, had come from Thomas James. Considerably later, Drury wrote James that "I have this day seen Mr. Martin who I find had not remitted you the money for the Collection you sent him but he has this day paid it to me & I have put it in the Box with my own"; Drury to Thomas James, 21 April 1772, Drury letterbook, 247, BM(NH).

⁹³ Dance, *Shell collecting*, 100.

⁹⁴ The excessively rare Martyn prospectus is illustrated by Dall, "Supplementary notes," 188.

⁹⁵ Swainson, *Taxidermy*, 99.

⁹⁶ The Swainson Correspondence, Linnean Society of London, includes letters exchanged with William Swainson about Abbot, and Francillon's letters to John L. Phillips, Add. MSS. 29533, British Library, contain numerous references to Abbot; see fn. 49 above.

97 Apparently Francillon's papers have not survived. He was probably born in 1744, and certainly died in 1816, so he was nearly thirty when Abbot left for America. Nothing of substance has been written about Francillon.

98 Drury to John Latham, 10 February 1772, 31 July 1772, Drury letterbook, 241, 250, BM(NH). Latham (1740-1837) was a physician at Dartford, Kent. Frederick C. Sawyer, "Notes on some original drawings of birds used by Dr. John Latham," *J. Soc. Bibliophy nat. Hist.* 2 (1949), 173-180, and Simpson, "The artist-naturalist John Abbot," mention Latham's use of Abbot's information. There is a useful entry in the *Dictionary of national biography*.

99 John Francillon to John L. Philips, 3 October 1792, Add. MSS. 29533, f. 75r-v, British Library.

100 Swainson (1789-1855) sought Francillon's assistance in obtaining Abbot's insects between 1813 and 1816. Subsequent letters exchanged directly with Abbot are in the Swainson Correspondence, Linnean Society of London, and in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

101 Lord Dartmouth to Lord Dunmore, 4 August 1773, Colonial Office Class 5, 74, 283, Public Record Office, London; transcript in the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

102 Charles R. Weld, *A history of the Royal Society* (London, 1848), 1: 224-225.

103 I am indebted to N. H. Robinson, Librarian of the Royal Society of London, for his investigations in the Society's archives, and his elucidation of favours extended to naturalists.

104 Abbot's disposal of his early drawings before his departure for America led to their location in Britain until they were sold to foreign purchasers early in the twentieth century.

105 Swainson, *Taxidermy*, 219-220, wrote that "Mr. Humphrey, for many years, was the chief commercial naturalist in this country; and from his father, who was in the same profession, he inherited immense collections both in conchology and mineralogy. . . his company was sought for by all the great collectors and naturalists of his time. . . he was my first preceptor and encourager in the study of nature." There are important references to Humphrey in Whitehead, "Emanuel Mendes da Costa," and Dance, *Shell collecting*; see also John W. Jackson, "A letter from George Humphrey to William Swainson," *J. Conch., Lond.* 20 (1937), 332-337. Drury knew Humphrey at least as early as 1767, when the dealer was living in St. Martin's Lane. I am grateful to Marcus B. Simpson for the information that some of Humphrey's Georgian specimens were mentioned by Latham in the *Index ornithologicus* (London, 1790-1801) and *Supplement II to the general history of birds* (London, 1801).

106 Drury to Devereux Jarratt, 5 May 1773, Drury letterbook, 269-270, BM(NH); Drury to James Greenway, 5 May 1773, *ibid.*, 270. Greenway was a correspondent of Linnaeus; Edward A. Wyatt, "Dr. James Greenway, eighteenth century botanist," *Tyler's q. hist. geneal. Mag.* 17 (1936), 210-223.

- 107 Drury to Thomas Bolton, 24 June 1773, Drury letterbook, 276, BM(NH).
- 108 *Daily advertiser* (15 July 1773), 1; *Lond. chronicle* (13-15 July 1773), 54.
- 109 Drury to Henry Smeathman, 4 July 1773, Drury letterbook, 279, BM(NH).
- 110 The count is in Drury's words. Perhaps Abbot meant 570 specimens rather than species.
- 111 Drury gave up his trade as a working silversmith and entered into partnership with Nathaniel Jefferys, goldsmith to the Queen. Their fashionable shop was located in the Strand. Drury received a joint appointment as Queen's goldsmith in 1772. Jefferys gradually retired and in 1773 Drury was pursuing the business alone as a goldsmith and jeweller. The events are documented in his letterbook, BM(NH).
- 112 Drury to Abbot, 10 April 1774, Drury letterbook, 315-316, BM(NH).
- 113 Drury to Henry Smeathman, 28 November 1774, Drury letterbook, 334, BM(NH). Drury enclosed a letter from Abbot to Smeathman.
- 114 *Ibid.*
- 115 Lever (1729-1788), a wealthy dilettante attracted to natural history, moved his collection from Alkington, near Manchester, to Leicester House, Leicester Square, in 1774. The "Leverian Museum" was one of London's attractions for many years; Dance, *Shell collecting*, 109-110; Allen, *The naturalist in Britain*, 68-69; and Lever's entry in the *Dictionary of national biography*.
- 116 Drury to Abbot, 28 November 1774, Drury letterbook, 333a-334a, BM(NH). Drury's provenance notebooks at Oxford University reveal that he received more than the ten Lepidoptera from Abbot's 1774 shipment. Twenty-two Coleoptera and three insects of other orders are identified as from the Abbot parcel. The notes which identify two beetles from Antigua as in Abbot's 1774 shipment are surely in error, unless Abbot obtained the specimens at second hand.
- 117 Hamilton J. Eckenrode, *The revolution in Virginia* (Boston and New York, 1916) is still the best history of the war for American independence in that former colony.
- 118 The war in Georgia is ably chronicled by Kenneth Coleman, *The American revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789* (Athens, Ga., 1958), and Coleman, *Colonial Georgia: a history* (New York, 1976).
- 119 According to Bassett, "Georgia records of John Abbot," the naturalist served in the Continental army during the war. The records she cites almost certainly refer to another John Abbot, who was illiterate. Elsa G. Allen discovered the confusion but did not publish the results of her research; Elsa G. Allen Papers, Cornell University Archives.

¹²⁰The sale was held in the rooms of King & Lochee, London auctioneers, on 23, 24 and 25 May 1805. Many of the leading British naturalists and collectors were in attendance. A copy of *A catalogue of the most capital assemblage of insects probably ever offered to public sale* ([London,] 1805), annotated with prices and names of purchasers, is preserved in the Library, Entomological Department, BM(NH). The total amount realized was £903/13/6.

Notes and Observations

CURATE'S OVUM. — Why do we entomologists persist in using the word *ova* when we mean *eggs* or, worse, that horrible word *ovipositing* instead of *egg-laying*? I can think of no other subject or branch of science that does so; birds do not lay ova and it would be a very pedantic person indeed who orders a fried ovum for his breakfast. Perhaps it is to be consistent with *larva* and *pupa* but these words are used for special forms that are peculiar to insects and their English equivalents are cumbersome and not precise; except in matters of detail there is nothing special about an insect's egg so why do we have to call it by a fancy name?

Let's face it: it is a legacy of a bogus intellectual snobbery which is unworthy of today's entomologists. It may, just *may*, be necessary for some special reason to refer to ovum or ova but the occasions will be rare; at all other times we should eschew outmoded jargon and say what we mean in plain English. — Lt. Col. W. A.C. CARTER, Briarfields, 4 Sandels Way, Beaconsfield, Bucks.

BASE MEDIUM FOR SPECIMENS TO BE FREEZE-DRIED. — With reference to the item by Colin W. Plant in Vol. 96 Nos. 5/6 I also have found that Plastazote deforms when in an Edwards EF2 freezer-drier. A satisfactory material is Kappa Board. This is a light weight display board consisting of a rigid foam sandwiched between white card surfaces, it is available in 3.5, 5, 10 and 15mm thicknesses. I usually use the 15mm. Satisfactory setting boards for micros can be produced by using a scalpel to make two cuts through the card of one side, the width of the required groove apart, and then with care peeling of the strip of card from the foam. The foam in the resulting groove can then be cut out to the depth required or, more simply, depressed using the reverse end of forceps. — D. H. HALL-SMITH, Assistant Keeper, Biology, Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries & Records Service, Leicester LE1 6TD.

A FIRST YEAR IN YORKSHIRE. — My first surprise was the relative abundance of the Juniper Carpet (*Thera juniperata* L.) at the kitchen window of my York house. A total of 22 were seen at light with 14 on one evening (20th October 1982). Whilst cutting the grass on September 29th a pale geometer flitted across the lawn at dusk. A back hander to the ground revealed a Vestal (*Rhodometra sacraria* L.). The weather consisted of strong southerly gales.

In 1983, the excellent late summer produced an abundance of visitors to the study light. Northern Spinach (*Lygris populata* L.)